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Small-Scale Agriculture Today

Office for Small-Scale Agriculture



WINTER 1995

U.S. Department of Agriculture - Cooperative State Research Service - Agricultural Research For A Better Tomorrow

AT ISSUE -- A NEED

According to a 1994 Louis Harris and Associates survey of Americans with disabilities, they lead markedly lower-quality lives than the general public. The results reported in the Washington Post (July 22, 1994) indicate "40 percent of individuals with disabilities have annual incomes of \$15,000 or less, compared with 18 percent of Americans with no disabilities. Only 10 percent have household incomes of \$50,000, compared with 22 percent of people with no disabilities." These figures depict a tragic story when coupled with further findings which report that "only 47 percent of people with disabilities believe that others treat them as equals -- as opposed to feeling sorry for them or being embarrassed. Only 35 percent are satisfied with their lives in general, compared with 55 percent of people without disabilities."

When the disabled must also endure the deprivation and humiliation of poverty, their plight seems endless. However, this is where container -- or market -- gardening plays an important role. Not only as a means of sound therapy and a source of income, but also to restore those qualities of life to which we are all entitled: human dignity and self-respect. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Office for Small-Scale Agriculture (OSSA) strongly supports the gardening efforts of disabled Americans and encourages their rehabilitative efforts by providing important information to assist their gardening ventures.

A market garden provides fresh, wholesome food with a small initial investment of time and money. Larger gardens offer opportunities for entire families to become involved in rebuilding their lives. Gardening offers a means for disabled individuals or those currently on welfare or other State or Federal subsidized programs to earn a portion of their income by producing and selling fresh food. Dealing with the public on a regular basis at local farmers' markets or just talking to other gardeners leads to greater understanding, social acceptance, and financial independence. Change is often frightening, especially to families without a strong financial foundation. Market gardens may initially be seen as a threat to long years of Federal or State dependency, yet with careful planning and guidance a balance can be achieved.

Fewer than one-third of disabled Americans aged 16 to 64 are working, but many more have indicated their desire to work. In locales with a high percentage of welfare recipients, gardening would provide an innovative first step on the road to independence. Producing cash crops from one's own efforts goes a long way toward restoring family pride. Disabled Americans are often innovative, and many develop creative means to deal with their disabilities. However, what they often lack are the regular social contacts derived from working. Gardening offers the stimulation of interacting with others, provides a valuable product for home consumption or sale, and enables one to enjoy the fruits -- and vegetables! -- of one's own labor.

Assistance in daily activities is often required for the disabled individuals surveyed. Help is indeed available! For example, each State provides vocational rehabilitation services (i.e., assistance to individuals to start market gardens, etc.) Additionally, court-ordered community service work provides a means of achieving what might seem impossible for some disabled Americans at first glance. There are numerous local, State, and Federal resources upon which to draw for people motivated enough to undertake rehabilitative work. And the results are rewarding! Even the most sedentary level of gardening provides the joy of witnessing new life sprouting forth from the earth; the pleasure of being able to see the results of one's own efforts; and an enhanced sense of one's value by earning a regular income.

Footnote - The Breaking New Ground Resource Center at Purdue University is developing a nationwide peer support network of farmers and ranchers who have experienced a disability themselves and would be willing to help other farmers who become disabled. Contact Barry Delks, Director, BNGRC, Purdue University, 1146 Agriculture Engineering Building, West Lafayette, IN 47907-1146; telephone 1-800-825-4264.

TOPICS AND TECHNOLOGY

New Two - "Pumpkins" and "Dairy and Meat Goats" are the latest factsheets in the series "A Small-Scale Agriculture Alternative" from the USDA Office for Small-Scale

Agriculture. Free, the publications list several sources of information. Contact: Bud Kerr, USDA-OSSA (Factsheets), Ag Box 2244, Washington, D.C. 20250-2244; telephone 202-401-1805; Fax 202-401-1804.

Question - How many pounds of milk are needed to make one gallon? Answer is somewhere in this newsletter.

Goat Products - "Goats Produce, Too! The Udder Real Thing!" is a very important book for anyone getting started in cheese making and using goat milk in other edibles. The 28-page book costs \$14. Contact: Mary Jane Toth, 2833 N. Lewis Road, Coleman, MI 48618; telephone 517-465-1982.

Free - Farmers' Bulletin FB-2279 "Sustainable Production of Fresh-Market Tomatoes with Organic Mulch." Contact: Aref A. Abdul-Baki, USDA-ARS, Vegetable Laboratory, Room 210, Bldg. 004, BARC-W, Beltsville, MD 20705; telephone 301-504-5057.

Declines - "Orange County California had 379 farms in 1992, a third fewer than the 504 it had in 1987. Moreover, acreage fell 44 percent, tumbling to 60,740 acres." (*The Journal of Commerce*, September 8, 1994, p. 6B)

Keep Sharp - For \$16, a unique knife sharpener and hone. Contact: Wayne Riggs, The Edgemaker Pro, Box 323, Altamont, KS 67330; telephone 316-784-5753.

Squash - Native to the Western hemisphere, squash was known to the American Indians centuries before Europeans arrived on our shores. It was called *askutasquash*, which means 'green-raw-unripe.'

Gourds - The American Gourd Society promotes the use of gourds in arts and crafts making. Contact: Pat Aisel, P.O. Box 274, Mount Gilead, OH 43338; telephone 419-362-6446.

New - "The Small Farm Handbook" is a practical, easy-to-follow 170-page book for prospective farmers who want to start a new enterprise. Make your \$24.55 check payable to "UC Regents." Contact: Jerry Hendrex, ANR Publications, University of California, 6701 San Pablo Avenue, Oakland, CA 94608-1239; telephone 510-642-2431.

Down Udder - "Milk consumption has been falling over the past decade. From 1983 through 1992, the annual amount consumed per person in the United States dropped 14 percent, from 18.2 gallons to 15.6." (*The Baltimore Sun*, October 12, 1994, p. 80)

Dandelion Celebration - The new 158-page book is "A Guide to Unexpected Cuisine," says the author. Cost is \$14.45. Contact: Peter Gail, Goosefoot Acres Press, P. O. Box 18016, Cleveland, OH 44118-0016; telephone or Fax 216-932-2145.

Dual Purpose - Fennel, the International Herb Association's (IHA) official plant for the 1995 Herb Week (always held the week leading up to Mother's Day) is an excellent culinary herb and likewise a host plant for butterfly larvae.

Mainstay - No other menu item offers a wider choice than soup! "Satisfying Soups: Homemade Bisques, Chowders, Gumbos, Stews and More" is a collection of more than 200 recipes. The 224-page book costs \$12.95. Contact: Storey Communications, Inc., Schoolhouse Road, Pownal, VT 05261.

Publication - "Sustainable Trees and Shrubs for Southern New England" is available for \$4 (checks payable to URI). It lists trees and shrubs that are non-invasive, require reduced inputs of pesticides, water, and maintenance. Contact: Alice Bristol, University of Rhode Island, CE Education Center, East Alumni Ave., Kingston, RI 02881; telephone 401-792-2900.

Farm Count - "The Census Bureau, which produces a farm census every five years, counted 1,925,300 farms in the United States in 1992, the smallest number since 1850. The decline has been steady since 1935, when the total number of farms peaked at 6.8 million as the Depression began the migration off the land and into the cities." (*The New York Times*, November 10, 1994, p. 24)

Request - The Small and Part-Time Farming Project (Penn State) has 20 publications available for distribution in the "Agriculture Alternative" series. A list of the titles is available from Jayson K. Harper, 214A Armsby Building, Penn State University, University Park, PA 16802; telephone 814-863-8638.

Each Costs \$10 - Two new videos -- "Sweet Basil: The Culinary Classic" and "Direct Marketing for Small Farmers." Contact: Sheila Whitley, North Carolina A&T State University, POB 21928, Greensboro, NC 27420; telephone 910-334-7050.

Rule-of-Thumb - Use twice as much or more of a fresh herb as you generally do of the dried variety.

500 Years - Christopher Columbus brought the first cattle to America on his second voyage in 1494.

Answer - It takes 8.6 pounds of milk to make one gallon.

USDA Visitors Center - On the Washington, D.C., Metro subway system, take the Blue or Orange line to the Smithsonian station, Mall exit. Enter the U.S. Department of Agriculture building on Thomas Jefferson Place on the Mall. Open weekdays 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; telephone 202-720-2791.

Corn Planting Tip - Pollination of supersweet corn by other types of corn will result in starchy kernels. To avoid this problem, separate supersweet plantings from other types by 350 feet or by allowing for a 10-day difference in maturity for adjacent plantings.

Did You Know - "Like other independent businesses, many U.S. farms are incorporated, but most - almost 82 percent -- are family held." (*The Cotton Gin and Oil Mill Press*, May 14, 1994, p. 8)

Portacooler - A portable, inexpensive farm-built precooler removes field heat from fresh produce -- especially berries -- and helps small growers and direct marketers provide a high quality product with a longer shelf life. For more information, contact: Daniel P. Schofer, USDA-AMS-TMD-DSB, Room 2945 South Building, P. O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456; telephone 202-720-8357.

Help Thank You - "The Caretaker Gazette" is a unique bimonthly newsletter that features job openings and advice and information for property caretakers and landowners. The cost is \$18 dollars for a one-year subscription. Contact: Cary Dunn, HC76, Box 4022, Garden Valley, ID 83622; telephone 208-462-3993.

Selling - The 224-page book "The Basic Guide to Selling Arts and Crafts" provides both basic information and a listing of over 250 contact sources. The cost is \$18.45 (no telephone orders). Contact: James Dillehay, Warm Snow Publisher, P.O. Box 75, Torreon, NM 87061; telephone 505-384-5135.

Invading - "At least 4,500 species of plants and animals from other parts of the world have established free-living populations in the United States, reported a 1993 study by the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment." (The New York Times, August 16, 1994, p. C4)

New Video - "Sustainability: The Quiet Revolution" (VH-6349-NR1), a 45-minute video, costs \$45. Contact: Distribution Center, Room 20, Coffey Hall, 1420 Eckles Avenue, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN 55108-6069; telephone 612-625-8713.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

Small Family Farm Week, 1994

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Small-scale family farms are a vital part of U.S. agricultural and rural life, and their activities add significantly to the economic and social strength of communities everywhere.

The majority of America's farms are small--out of more than two million farms, seven out of ten gross less than \$50,000 annually. Small-scale farms, with their varied range of needs and interests, provide an array of agricultural products to the consumers of our Nation and our world.

Since the time of Thomas Jefferson, Americans have realized that family farmers are essential to making our rich land one of the most agriculturally productive in the world. Today, these diverse entrepreneurs represent the historical foundation of America's prosperity.

Small-scale family farms have survived the winds of change that have blown across our country's landscape in recent years.

Farmers are ever more entrepreneurial, responding to unique niches and specialty-market opportunities. Many small-scale family farms are responsible for the innovations that are advancing new and enhanced technologies in agriculture and farming systems.

Family farmers are also stewards of the land and have a vested interest in energy conservation and protection of the environment. Many occupy land that their families have farmed for generations, and they seek to pass on the proud legacy of farming to their children.

More and more farmers are providing their products directly to consumers. Through such direct sales, the family farmer is creating market opportunities that benefit and strengthen rural economies and communities throughout America.

With each season, America's farmers demonstrate anew our ability to persevere and thrive. The great traditions of hard work and determination that have consistently characterized American agriculture will help our Nation envision a rich harvest of plenty for the twenty-first century.

The Congress, by Senate joint Resolution 171, has designated the week of March 20 through 26, 1994, as "Small Family Farm Week" and has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of that week.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the week beginning March 20, 1994, as Small Family Farm Week.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fifth day of March, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and eighteenth.

Please Circulate

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To file a complaint, write the Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250, or call 202-720-7327 (voice) or 202-720-1127 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity employer.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 6-7, 1995 - 14th Horticulture Industries Show, Tulsa, OK. Contact: D. Bankes, POB 126, Oologah, OK 74053; telephone 918-342-3138.

January 10-11, 1995 - Illinois Specialty Growers Association Conference, Decatur, IL. Contact: Lowell Lenschow, 1701 Towanda Ave., Bloomington, IN 61702-2901; telephone 309-557-2107.

January 12-14, 1995 - Virginia Ag Celebration '95, State Fairgrounds, Richmond, VA. Contact: Linda Beck, POB 26805, Richmond, VA 23261; telephone 804-228-3200.

January 14, 1995 - Dairy Goat Conference, Classroom Office Building, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN 55108-1030. Contact: Pat De Steno, telephone 1-800-367-5363.

February 2-3, 1995 - 1995 Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association (MFVGA) Conference, Civic Center, St. Cloud, MN. Contact: A.M. Sammerud, MFVGA, 1207 Constance Blvd. N.E., Ham Lake, MN 55304; telephone 612-434-5929.

February 2-4, 1995 - North American Farmers Direct Marketing Conference, Knoxville Holiday Inn, Knoxville, TN. Contact: Lana Doncastor, 1702 Parkridge Drive, Knoxville, TN 37914; telephone 615-522-0039, Fax 615-694-6625.

February 7-9, 1995 - 1995 New York State Direct Marketing Conference, Batavia, NY. Contact: Ken Silsby, Niagara County CES, 4487 Lake Avenue, Lockport, NY 14094; telephone 716-433-2651.

February 10-17, 1995 - Berry Conference Week, Sheraton Plaza Hotel, Orlando, FL. Paul Otten (612-659-2418) is the contact for both the Bramble Growers (Feb. 10-11) and the International Ribes Association (Feb. 12). The contact for the NASGA Annual Conference (Feb. 12-15) and the 4th Strawberry Conference (Feb. 15-17) is Bill Courter, POB 160, W. Paducah, KY 42086, telephone 502-488-2116.

February 16-18, 1995 - Kitchen Collaborative, Panhandle Area Council Annual Conference Series 1995, Coeur D'Alene Resort, Coeur D'Alene, Idaho. Contact: Cameron Wold, PAC, 11100 Airport Drive, Hayden, ID 83835; telephone 208-772-0584; Fax 208-772-6196.

February 26-28, 1995 - 12th Annual California Farm Conference, Radisson Hotel, Sacramento, CA. Contact: Lynn Bagley, Marin County Farmers Market, 1114 Irwin Street, San Rafael, CA 94901, telephone 1-800-897-FARM.

March 1-4, 1995 - North American Deer Farmers Association (NADeFA) Annual Conference, Nashville Convention Center, Nashville, TN. Contact: Barbara R. Fox, NADeFA, 9301 Annapolis Road #206, Lanham, MD 20706-3115; telephone 301-459-7708.

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